

Oral History Presentation Abstract
Jan Morse – Utah Abandoned Mine Land Program

Utah is blessed with rich mineral resources. President Abraham Lincoln called it “the treasure house of the nation.” Many of the mineral resources of the world are found in Utah, including the only domestic source of beryllium. The gold rush in the nineteenth century, coal mining for both domestic and sophisticated industrial use, and the uranium boom of the mid-twentieth century all left their marks on Utah’s history and residents.

The Utah Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program began using oral history as a form of cultural mitigation beginning in 1983. Oral history collection was sporadic and project-specific up through 2012. In 2013, we began an ongoing project to collect oral histories whenever we have an opportunity. We have learned that the personal impressions and perspectives of people who worked in the mines or were associated with the mining industry in some way provide an important part of the story of mining in Utah.

As we work with landowners and stakeholders to plan reclamation of past mining hazards, we are uniquely positioned to meet people who have stories to tell. We now have an efficient mechanism to follow through with recording these stories, publishing them online, and placing all collected material in the State Archive making these resources available to anyone who wants to research Utah’s mining history.

The oral history project is one component of our public education efforts, helping AMRP encourage the public to appreciate Utah’s mining history while learning to “Stay Out and Stay Alive.” Other outreach efforts include a web map of mining heritage sites, booths at community events, a workbook for fourth grade students to complement their Utah history curriculum, and an annual calendar of historic mining photos sent to our professional contacts.